

Young People and the Church

OUR contemporary, the *Presbyterian*, is publishing a series of articles on "The Young People and the Church," which are interesting and suggestive. The first is entitled: "The Church's Shame," and deals with the lax attitude of the Church in regard to its youth. Do these statements apply to Methodism? Read them and form your own opinion:

"Our Church is not measuring up to her standard in the matter of caring for her young people. She is following the mad policy of drift, if policy it can be called. There is little that corresponds to the care of the shepherd for his sheep in her dealings with them. She does not seem to realize that the most sacred trust God can commit to His Church is the care of the rising generation, whose souls are of infinite value in His sight and with whom are the possibilities of the future.

"The Church cares for the children. Our people are awake to the claims of the home and Sabbath School and are giving them considerable attention. But great numbers of our boys and girls leave the Sabbath School as they approach maturity, and we are not giving the earnest thought to providing for their needs at that period which the seriousness of the situation demands. They are, therefore, left without religious leadership at the very time that they need it most.

"This was brought out clearly at the Assembly. The present is a time of unrest in Canada. Our young people are leaving their homes in great numbers for the cities and the new West and North. They leave behind them the home church, and the most sacred influences of their lives. They may enter the Church of their fathers in the place to which they go. But that Church does not guarantee that they shall.

"A young person in a strange place goes up on a Sabbath morning to worship. He is friendless and lonely. Everything is strange and he is more alone amid the multitude of worshippers than in the solitude of his own room. He shrinks from strangers while longing for a friendly hand. He goes out unnoticed, unwelcomed. Even the Church, which he revered, seems to have no place for him. Is it any wonder he does not care to go back? Meanwhile the resorts of evil offer him an exuberant welcome.

"Now, that was the Church's opportunity. When he was alone and needed friends the Church should have provided them. When he had no way of amusing his leisure hours she should have offered him opportunities of companionship and usefulness. He would have been glad then to respond to her advances, and a valuable worker would have been gained where workers are sorely needed. But in numberless instances the opportunity has been hopelessly lost.

"The congregation to which he goes is partly to blame. Christians should understand that when a young person comes along to the place of worship he means business—he recognizes the Church's claim and feels the need of such help as she can give. He should be met in a spirit of the utmost friendliness and interest. Not one should be allowed to leave without a brotherly greeting. The district surrounding the church should be so thoroughly worked that every young person coming into it from a Presbyterian home may be found out and looked after. Yet numbers of our young people tell us that they come into our churches and cities, and no one thinks of visiting them or caring for them.

"The congregation he left is partly to blame. She should not have allowed him to leave her borders without making every effort to connect him with another congregation in the place of his choice. How that may be done will be considered in a later article.

"Does this Church realize that by this policy we are losing hundreds of our young people? If, when they left us they joined other Churches, the Master's cause would not suffer. But the majority of those we lose do not go into other denominations—they drift into worldliness and sin. If we neglect our vineyard, others will not work it for us. To let one such soul stray away is an irreparable loss. The cause of Christ is suffering. The Church is being drained of her best blood. Her own young people are the Church's most valuable asset. Those who have been nurtured in our homes, imbued with our Church's traditions and spirit, trained in her doctrines and principles are the Church's hope. To let them slip out of our hands through sheer neglect is folly. It is worse than folly—it is a violation of the most sacred trust God has given to men."

An Honest Look at Ourselves

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AT the beginning of each year, merchants are accustomed to take an account of their stock of goods on hand; and all prudent men of business make an examination of their affairs, asking, "Am I a richer or a poorer man?" If it is wise for the tradesman to face his own financial condition, how much more is it the duty of every one of us to take an honest searching inlook of our own hearts, and the condition of our immortal souls. "Examine yourselves," is the plain, yet kind commandment in God's Word.

One might suppose that the person we live with every day, and who inhabits our own body, would be thoroughly known to us. Yet how pitifully ignorant we often prove to be, and how many chambers in our own heart-house are seldom explored at all! Happy is the man who acts the Columbus to his own soul! Our greatest spiritual danger lies in the direction of unsuspected or undeveloped qualities. No one knows what is in him until he is tried. This truth cuts both ways; it applies to the good qualities as well as to latent weaknesses or vices. For example, Abraham could not have known how much faith he had in God until he flashed the bare blade over the bosom of his beloved son. Daniel may not have fairly measured his own courage until the threat of the den of lions stared him in the face. One of the purposes of God's dealings and discipline of His people is not only to put His grace into them, but to bring His grace out of them.

On the other hand, David had seen the cover of a very horrible pit in his own character lifted off when he wrote, with a pen dipped in tears, that penitential fifty-first psalm.

Judas may have passed for an average specimen of honesty till the day he was intrusted to him, and the chief priests held up the shroud before his greedy eyes. Peter boasted of his own constancy until His Master let him know what a flaw there was in his iron; just there the iron snapped. It is the undetected flaw that lets the axle break when the locomotive is spinning over the track at forty miles an hour—with frightful wreck of cars and passengers! Christians are never in greater spiritual peril than when dashing along at a high speed of prosperity, amid the envy of many beholders. At such time look out for the axle!

Sometimes we hear of the commercial failure of men who have stood high in the business community. They were not rogues or swindlers. But they were lamentably ignorant of the true state of their own affairs. They either over-estimated their own assets, or were afraid to probe their own losses to the bottom. Surely we ought to "take heed to ourselves," and to know just how we stand toward God. Not only our peace of mind, but our character and our eternal welfare are at stake. We ought to search ourselves honestly.

We might well prove ourselves with such questions as these: Do I hate sin—even the sins I used to love—and do I fight against them, and pray to be delivered from them? Do I submit my will to Christ, and let him rule me and guide me? Do I give to my Master the key to my purse, my time, and my influence? Do I feel a solid satisfaction in doing right, and a great joy in laboring for the welfare of my fellow men. Am I striving honestly to live every day as I pray? If we can find in our daily experience and conduct a satisfactory answer